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AUTHOR Hirst, Lois A.; Blomquist, David M.
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ABSTRACT

In an effort to explore new methods of evaluation better suited to alternative instructional styles, a model peer coaching program was implemented at Northern Michigan University. The program was based on findings from a review of the literature and was designed to meet the University's needs for continuing improvement in teaching and learning, ensure that instruction reflects the knowledge bases and best practices in professional education, and show public school educators how a critical thinking process can increase knowledge and improve instruction. The initial stage of the peer coaching model was implemented in winter 1991. In the model, two instructors met before lecture to discuss the session's objectives and teaching strategies, while the peer observer remained in the classroom to provide comments afterward. The collegial atmosphere created by the peer approach led to two unplanned teaching improvements. The first involved restructuring a school personnel administration course by asking students to write case studies as a basis for class discussion and collaboration. The second involved a school finance course and combined peer coaching and student interaction, with students examining texts and then collectively deciding which interpretation was the most accurate. By using a peer coaching approach that regards each instructor as competent and provides a sense of equality between instructors, collegiality among faculty is increased and the stress of educational innovation is decreased. Contains 14 references. (MAB)

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Partnerships Improve Teaching and Learning

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Lois A. Hirst
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PARTNERSHIPS IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Lois A. Hirst
David M. Blomquist
Northern Michigan University

Abstract

There are many practical, creative teaching alternatives. However, unless there is a process to assess the effectiveness of these alternatives, there is no way to know whether they are an improvement over traditional lecture. A critical analysis of instruction with a peer in a non-threatening environment can lead to improvement in teacher effectiveness and student learning. This presentation will focus on a peer project at Northern Michigan University designed to help faculty improve teacher effectiveness and student learning.

Introduction

The quality of instruction at the university or college level varies greatly. The evaluation process in most institutions of higher education does not reward quality teaching. More emphasis is placed on research and service. Because quality teaching is not rewarded, very little research is being done in this area. As a result the literature offers few models for University professors to improve or to help one another. A critical analysis of instruction with a peer in a non-threatening environment can lead to such a model and create a partnership for improving teaching and learning.

A difference in the process for improvement of instruction at the university level has to be explored. Work with K-12 districts has convincingly indicated that peer coaching, rather than direct supervision, is that process. Supervision at the K-12 level has historically been top-down. School administrators, superintendents, and principals were charged with this task. According to Oliva (1989) their function has been to give directions, check on compliance with prescribed teaching techniques, and evaluate results of instruction by teachers in their charge. K-12 supervision has been a way of maintaining power over classroom teachers and control of the classroom environment. Lucio and McNeil (1979) concluded that teachers in these cases were viewed merely as instruments that should be closely supervised to insure that they carry out the methods determined by the administrators. Very few university programs have trained administrators to do anything different. Programs that did address instruction continued to focus on evaluation of teaching rather than supervision for improvement of instruction. It was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that the concept of clinical supervision challenged this process. Cogan(1973), an early advocate, held that clinical supervision was neither counseling nor therapy, it functioned as a professional collegiality between supervisor and teacher. A trend toward administrator and teacher working together for improvement of instruction began with the introduction of clinical supervision. Even with this model, however, the concept of administrator as the expert and the teacher as the subordinate continued.

Instructional leadership has become a universally accepted role for educational administrators and is more inclusive in its concept than supervision. While the term means different things to different people, Sergiovanni (1992b) says that direct leadership still receives too much emphasis. Again the administrator remains the expert and the teacher the subordinate. He suggests that we find substitutes for direct leadership so teachers can become self-managing. One way to develop self-management is through building collegial relationships between two or more teachers, which create partnerships. The university setting is most conducive to forming such partnerships.

The K- 12 model for supervision or evaluation does not operate at the university. Academic freedom allows college professors to teach what and how they want without unwarranted interference from superordinates. The university concept assumes a professionalism exists which guarantees quality instruction; to a large extent this assumption proves accurate. However, it is also true that existing autonomy and isolation make it unlikely that collegial professional relationships for improving teaching will develop naturally. One of the purposes of this paper is to describe a Peer Coaching model developed by the authors at Northern Michigan University in Marquette, Michigan. The model allows professional educators to develop collegial professional partnerships to help them improve their teaching in a threat free environment in cooperation with their Department Chairs, but apart from direct supervision or evaluation from that office.

Department Chairs who encourage faculty to enter collegial improvement relationships not only will find better working relationships among faculty, but will also enhance their position of respect with the department and university. The improvement process may be hindered by Department Chairs who use their position power to evaluate. They earn real power through giving it away, by freeing faculty to enter collegial relationships to achieve improvement as a result of their cooperative efforts. Hagberg (1984) describes how successful leaders move from lower stages of power (position power) to higher stages (empowerment).

The term collegiality goes beyond congeniality. (congeniality suggests a more superficial relationship that may exist in a school, but may not be related to teaching and learning. Susan Moore Johnson (1990) describes collegiality as teachers who are:

> working together, debating about goals and purposes, coordinating lessons, observing and critiquing each other's work, sharing successes and offering solace, with the triumphs of their collective efforts far exceeding the summed accomplishments of their solitary struggle. (p.148)

According to Sergiovanni (1992a), collegiality must be valued as a professional virtue. He states that real collegiality:

> is connected to the existence of a set of norms and values that defines the faculty as a community of like-minded people who are bonded together in a common commitment. Because of shared work goals and a common work identity, they feel obligated to work together for the common good... As professionals, teachers are not only concerned with their teaching practice but with the practice of teaching itself-and their concern requires them to act collegially (p. 213).

Hargreaves and Dawe (1990) report that supervision is incompatible with healthy collegial relations because it consists of "hierarchical relations embedded in bureaucratically-driven systems" (p. 25). In their view, clinical supervision is a form of contrived collegiality and rarely fosters the conditions associated with interdependent collegiality.

Collegiality cannot be forced upon people. It must be intrinsically motivated by a mutual desire by two or more colleagues who wish to help one another improve. Evidence is mounting in the research that teachers generally learn more readily from interactions with other teachers than they do from interactions with supervisors (Grimmett, Rostad & Ford, 1992).

A natural outcome of collegiality among university faculty members is trust building. The unspoken, yet very evident presence of competition between professors within and between departments is reduced, and cooperative efforts to meet organizational goals is enhanced. Department Chairs can provide leadership through empowering faculty to become self-managed and self-directed in their efforts to improve their teaching. Most evaluation processes in departments are strictly that, evaluations to meet contractual obligations with very little concern for improvement. Partnerships, on the other hand, improve teaching and relationships.

In his book, *On Becoming a Leader*, Warren Bennis (1989) describes ten factors for creating learning organizations. One of them he calls, "Leaders understand the Pygmalion effect in management" (p. 197). Just as Professor Henry Higgins will never accept Eliza Doolittle as anything other than his remake of a Cockney flower girl, educational administrators who maintain control of teachers' evaluations as a means for their improvement will be unable to establish trust among staffing their ability to be self-managing or assume a role in their own professional development. They will instead need to develop the attitude described in Bennis' first factor, "Leaders manage the dream" (p. 192). If one can recruit good people, communicate the vision, let them carry the ball and then reward them for excellence, that person is managing the dream effectively and is developing trust and good will while improving teaching.

Professional educators who are managing their own dream have broken out of the mold. They are changing the accepted context in which they are expected to work. They are no longer "prisoners of the habits, practices and rules" (Bennis, p. 36) which create the culture of their workplace. Again, as Bennis asserts, they Conquer the context" (p. 37). They change the ways things are done. They "refuse to be deployed by others and choose to deploy themselves (p. 37). Educational administrators who promote such behavior on the part of their professional staff become managers of the dream, and their staff becomes colleagues who are free to dream and do and become better and better at what they do. Our model has helped us become self-managers of our professional development.

Quality instruction requires an analysis of how appropriate knowledge bases, pedagogy, content, and pedagogical content are tied to effective professional practice. Lee Shulman refers to this as "wisdom of practice" (Brandt, 1992). Research on effective professional practice appears in every educational journal. Now it is time to encourage instructors to use this research creatively, experiment with it, and take risks in a threat free environment. In an interview with Ron Brandt (1992), Lee Shulman says that he becomes:

> especially concerned when districts not only teach the principles of effective teaching in their staff development programs but also translate them into the instruments through which they evaluate teachers, as if to imply that if teachers are enacting these general principles they are effective and even excellent teachers, and that we need not ask any more questions about their teaching (p. 16).

We are proposing a model which will encourage instructors to experiment, take risks, be creative, break out of their context, and develop collegial relationships, while strengthening their instructional programs. We found the implementation of the model to be among our most professionally rewarding experiences.

The Project

After reviewing the research literature on supervision, evaluation and peer coaching, we developed a program that meets the needs of the University for continued improvement in teaching and learning. At the same time our program meets the needs of the Education Department to ensure that the instruction offered reflects the knowledge bases and best practice in professional education. The program also offers a vehicle to show to public school educators how a critical thinking process can increase knowledge and improve teaching and learning.

During the Winter 1991 semester we used a peer coaching model. ED 541B, Supervision of Instruction, taught by Lois Hirst, and ED 544, School Law, taught by David Blomquist were scheduled for alternate Tuesday evenings on campus in order to implement this model in classes at the University. We chose to use Glickman's clinical supervision process to begin the program. Glickman (1990) proposes several methods for supervision: directive, collaborative and nondirective.

The model consisted of a pre-conference prior to delivery of a class session, where objectives and teaching strategies were discussed. The observing teacher sat in on the class session, taking notes as the session progressed. Script-taping, anecdotal record and selective verbatim were the methods of recording. In addition a video-tape of each class session was made. The videotape was done for research purposes rather than for peer coaching. While it can be very instructive if used appropriately, we do not recommend video-taping unless both instructors believe there is a special need. We believe that video-taping is much more intrusive than a peer observer. It can be restrictive, threatening, stifle creativity, and spontaneity and bring in an element of evaluation. A post conference between the two instructors then followed where the effectiveness of the strategies in meeting the objectives was discussed. Neither of us viewed the video-tape prior to that conference. The conference was held as soon as possible after the observation. Again, both the pre-conference and post-conference were also videotaped for research purposes. The roles of the observing teacher and the instructor were alternated by the two NMU instructors.

While the model worked very well for us, we found the directive concept of Glickman's model very uncomfortable. Our uneasiness, we believe, was directly related to our experience. Superordinates employ directive evaluation methods. Peer coaches or professional colleagues should not. They should instead use the collaborative and non-directive approaches. In fact, we found them to be the same thing. An example would be the time, after an evening of much teacher-led lecture and question-and-answer by one of the authors, he sought the ear of his

colleague. She listened as he described his concerns about the effectiveness of the class and his ideas for a better procedure. She then offered positive reinforcement for his ideas and made several additional observations. Both collaborative and nondirective approaches were operating and both colleagues benefitted by the process. A directive approach would have been unnatural and stress producing, thus rendering the experience less beneficial to both. Any behaviors which produce the "evaluative, I have the clipboard" aura detracts from the collegial relationship of two equal partners trying to help one another improve.

We now believe that there is another level beyond the formal conference stage outlined in the project. This stage emerged during the 1991-92 academic year and was not a planned activity. It grew out of the genuine collegial relationship which had emerged during the formal project. We believe this stage correlates with Sergiovanni's (1992a) professional and moral sources of authority. He describes what is expected when we base supervision on professional authority as "teachers are expected to respond to common socialization, accepted tenets of practice, and internalized expertness." Supervision under moral authority is described by "teachers are expected to respond to shared commitments and interdependence" (pp. 204-206).

In the winter of 1992 one of the authors, Lois Hirst, was exploring alternative ways of presenting concepts for ED 542, School Personnel Administration. In reviewing the literature she found several articles (Kagan & Tippins, 1991; Shulman, 1991) which described programs where students wrote case studies and used them as a basis for discussion in classes. The idea had great appeal. She spoke with her colleague, David Blomquist, who encouraged her, asked questions which forced her to think about her reasons for wanting to include case study writing, whether or not there was a research base for what she wanted to do, and whether it was appropriate for the content of this specific course. We concluded that it was important to try case study writing.

Students were given guidelines, and a discussion concerning the components of good narrative writing took place. Students presented first drafts which were critiqued by the instructor and 3 or 4 other students in their small groups. Everything from grammatical structure to content and purposes was discussed. Students rewrote and presented a second draft to the instructor, their groups, a practicing teacher, and a practicing administrator before presenting a final case study.

During this process, we informally discussed the progress of the case study writing--sometimes literally in the hallway of the faculty office building. At the end of the semester students heartily endorsed the use of case study writing as adding to their understanding of school personnel administration, because it gave them an opportunity to react, reflect upon, and solve "real" situations. We discussed the students' reactions and shared some case studies. A few changes in procedure were made as a result of these discussions, and case study writing has become a part of the course.

At about the midpoint of a Spring 1992 course in school finance, David Blomquist found himself to be unhappy with the way class had gone on the evening referred to earlier. Three and a half hours of lecture and discussion on taxation and equity in school finance had caused a strain on students and professor. As his colleague listened and reinforced many of his ideas they explored some options which would create a more productive climate while meeting the class objectives. She suggested small group analysis of portions of the lesson with feedback from one group to the others. He offered another idea, introducing a competitive spirit by having the class vote on which groups had the best solution. Thus, they both agreed on a third activity. Each group was to read a section of the text, discuss it, rewrite it in their own words, and present their work to the whole class. All three ideas were applied in succeeding class sessions. The students participated excitedly, the objectives of the lesson were met and our partnership had brought us to Sergiovanni's professional and moral levels of authority.

Conclusion

There were no formal observations. Fine tuning of teaching techniques or small components of the effective teaching research were not necessary. We acknowledge each other as effective instructors. Both of us are still concerned with our own teaching practice but have become aware of the practice of teaching itself. By thinking through the process, we believe that we serve as role models for teachers and administrators in our classes. We are willing to take risks, acknowledge when we have failed, learn from these failings, and become better instructors

for having taken risks. Bennis (1989) states, "It's self evident that if we can't take the risk of saying or doing something wrong, our creativity goes right out the window." (p. 95)

School administrators and university department heads can encourage teachers to move in this direction. They must be forewarned, however, that teachers will not reach this new stage of professionalism overnight. It emerges through experience and the development of a collegial process.

New teachers are concerned with self and survival. This preoccupation will continue as long as the tenure process remains. The conference process is very important to their development. Instructors may need directive conferencing if they lack knowledge bases or are unsure of themselves. As they become more self-assured, they can move to collaborative and non-directive methods. Once they have become reflective and are comfortable with their teaching decisions, they may move to a stage of professionalism that they have not known in the past. Unless there is a specific problem they cannot solve, classroom observation and conferencing is not necessary. If they have a real collegial relationship, they can feel comfortable taking risks, making mistakes, learning from those mistakes, and achieving professional status. As Sergiovanni(1992a) says in the opening statements of his article, he looks forward to the day when there will be "supervision with no supervision, evaluation or inservice as we know these practices today" (p. 203).

We see this as an achievable goal. We have concluded that this process is effective and should be ongoing. Its strengths are that it establishes a trust relationship between professional colleagues which increases knowledge, improves practice, and results in an opportunity to improve without fear of jeopardizing one's professional standing. School administrators, supervisors, and department heads need to let go of position power, create a climate for collegiality-not just congeniality-and embrace the higher stage of leadership: empowerment. When they are able to do this, the teaching profession will become just that a profession.

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